OPENING STATEMENT
of
DR. CHARLES G. GROAT
on the
FY 2000 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
before the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 16, 1999

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to present the U.S. Geological Survey=s budget request for Fiscal Year 2000. While this is my first appropriation hearing as the USGS Director, I hope to bring to this process an understanding from a customer's perspective having been a customer of and having worked with the USGS for many years.

Today, I will tell you about recent successes and our highest-priority research areas for FY 2000 and explain how this research fits into the larger picture of science needs for the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Nation. With extensive capabilities in natural science, the USGS is uniquely able to provide its customers with reliable and impartial scientific information on a wide range of issues. The challenge for the USGS in the 21st century will be to deliver relevant products and services to our customers in an efficient and timely manner.

But before I move into the details of our budget request, I'd like to share with you what I feel are some very exciting recent results coming from USGS science that have had a direct effect on the lives of many American citizens.

I'll start with last year's torrential rains of El Niño. While they affected much of the Nation, they hammered the West coast where they brought not only flooding, but the life-threatening hazard of landslides. The results of a similar battle with El Niño in 1982 caused 25 deaths in the 10-county San Francisco Bay region. In 1998, I am pleased to report that not one single death was caused by landslides in the same 10-county region, in part because of the landslide hazard area maps and real-time warnings of increased landslide risk that the USGS was able to provide the region's emergency workers.

Another very exciting result from last year comes out of USGS' National Water Use Program. We provide 5-year reports on national water use which water resource managers and planners nation-wide depend on to make critical planning decisions. The most recent survey, released last year, showed some excellent news--per capita water use has declined since 1990 in spite of continued population growth. This suggests that water conservation efforts across the Nation are

succeeding in a significant way. Of course, we would have not been able to know this without the USGS' continuous collection and analysis of key natural science information.

Population growth influences another area of USGS science-- understanding the impacts of urban growth. The majority of Americans now live in or near expanding urban areas which is creating new pressures on the Nation's transportation systems and regional infrastructure. A critical question for local and regional planners is where will this growth spread to next? USGS science can help answer this question based on its 100-year archive of historic topographic maps and its 30-year archive of satellite image data.

The USGS and university collaborators have already provided urban growth patterns in the San Francisco-Sacramento and Baltimore-Washington areas to local and regional officials. The USGS is currently working in the Greater New York; Philadelphia-Wilmington; Chicago-Milwaukee; and the Portland-Vancouver urban areas to provide this key information based on the Survey's long term databases.

My last example takes us from urban growth to abandoned mine lands on or adjacent to the public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS). The USGS is working closely with these land management agencies in developing a watershed-based strategy to provide the scientific information needed for efficient and cost-effective cleanup of abandoned mine lands. This multidisciplinary effort is producing solid results by identifying both the largest sources of contamination and those that do not need attention. This enables efficient targeting of cleanup activities. USGS is also determining environmental conditions that existed before mining began in order to establish realistic cleanup goals. This activity will continue to be of increasing value as additional and more complete information is obtained.

These recent results of USGS science are only a few examples of the continuing and direct contributions made to the daily lives of the American public. They also demonstrate how the FY 2000 USGS budget, $838.5 million as requested by the President, will fund research to provide crucial scientific information for the Department=s land managers along with other Federal, State and local decisionmakers, and for disaster mitigation and recovery efforts throughout government and private organizations.

Our FY 2000 budget requests a $40.6 million net increase over FY 1999 enacted funding to expand USGS efforts to increase science support for informed land and resource management, improve hazard warning capability, and increase availability and accessibility of USGS data. The request continues to reflect the USGS=s commitment to integrating our scientific disciplines into a unified approach for gathering information, analyzing data, and delivering scientific information to our customers.

As the Department's science agency, the USGS works directly with NPS, BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other Interior bureaus to address their highest priority research needs. In

FY 2000, the USGS is consolidating $15 million in current DOI support activities with a requested $15 million increase to focus science resources on the most urgent research priorities of these bureaus. This $30 million in DOI Science Priorities proposal brings the total USGS funding that directly supports Interior bureaus' science needs to well over 20% of our annually-appropriated budget.

The DOI Science Priorities request will enable more high-priority multidisciplinary research to help DOI agencies address increasingly complex issues from a foundation of sound impartial scientific information. For example, for NPS, this initiative will focus an additional $2 million in science support as well as an additional $3 million on the Natural Resource Preservation Program. It will also complement the biologically-oriented support that will continue to be provided by our Biological Resources Division.

American communities need environmental and natural resources data to ensure a high quality of life and sustained economic growth. Two-thirds of the proposed $10 million increase for the Community/ Federal Information Partnership would go to local communities through a competitive matching grant program. This will help them create and use geospatial data and associated technologies. The remaining funding proposed will allow USGS to improve public access to geospatial data through the National Spatial Data Infrastructure. This proposal is part of the Administration's $39.5 million Community/Federal Information Partnership within the comprehensive "Livability Agenda."

Understanding complex ecological problems also requires long-term data. Because amphibians are considered good indicators of ecosystem health due to their sensitivity to many kinds of environmental stress, there is an urgent need to evaluate the severity and scope of their decline. The USGS is requesting an increase of $5.6 million for amphibian monitoring and research to determine the causes and scope of the amphibian population decline.

Day in and day out, USGS streamgages, earthquake sensors, and other warning equipment are at work monitoring natural hazards to protect life and property throughout the Nation. As good as they are, with the passage of time, they need to be modernized to properly maintain their vigil. We are requesting a $5.5 million increase to accelerate the upgrade of our Nation=s natural hazards networks and expand our real-time warning capabilities. This increase will also improve our ability to measure changes in the Earth's magnetic field, an area crucial to today's high dependency on electronic communications.

Since 1992, natural disasters have cost this country an average of $50 billion a year. Useable, timely scientific information helps relief organizations and local governments save lives and reduce the costs of natural disasters. During the past year, the USGS provided its crucial scientific data for the Nation=s response to three devastating hurricanes -- Bonnie, Georges and Mitch. Providing our data in such a rapid-response mode aided the search and rescue efforts associated with these disasters, particularly Hurricane Mitch. These experiences have demonstrated the urgent need to deliver crucial information early and often to agencies responding to disasters in the U.S. and abroad. These disasters have also demonstrated an urgent need to establish

protocols for collecting and sharing hazard data so that this information is available for decision making before disasters strike. The USGS has requested $8 million to contribute to an interagency effort to create a Disaster Information Network with common data standards and protocols capable of providing critical information when and where it is needed.

Additional FY 2000 increases include: $1 million for coral reef research; $1.1 million to study hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and for the study of native species in Hawaii; $1 million to begin next-generation work on the National Biological Information Infrastructure; $1.5 million for deferred maintenance of our many facilities, particularly those with health and safety problems of highest priority; and $2.5 million to expand our satellite data archive capacity for data from Landsat 7 which is scheduled for launch this April.

Along with the budget highlights just mentioned, please note that our FY 2000 proposal takes a key step toward restructuring our budget to more clearly delineate science from the functions that support science. This restructuring consolidates appropriated facilities costs into an expanded *Facilities* line item, and all bureau-level administrative costs are consolidated into an expanded general administrative line item called *Science Support.* While it may appear that some programs have received a decrease in funding through this budget restructuring, most programs simply have had their administrative costs re-categorized, leaving the research funding intact.

The restructure also establishes a new budget activity -- *Integrated Science* -- which brings a more unified scientific response to critical and emerging resource management issues and challenges. It includes $30 million for the previously-discussed DOI Science Priorities and a total $17.7 million for place-based studies in South Florida, Chesapeake Bay and Watershed, Great Lakes, Platte River, Greater Yellowstone Area, San Francisco Bay/Delta, Mojave Desert and Salton Sea. Funding for place-based studies includes a requested increase of $2.4 million over FY 1999.

Emergency supplemental funding provided by the Congress to DOI in FY 1999 will allow the USGS to use $15 million to ensure that our computer systems, including those providing critical scientific data, will be Y2K compliant.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the USGS is striving to ensure that our customers get the science information they need, when they need it, in a form they can use. Thank you for your continued support and interest in the work of USGS to provide science for a changing world. I would be pleased to answer your questions.